



# IOWA WEST FOUNDATION

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **IOWA WEST FOUNDATION GRANTS \$1.7 MILLION FOR LOCAL EDUCATION INITIATIVES**

(Council Bluffs, IA, May 30, 2008) Earlier this year, the Iowa West Foundation made educational attainment, including increasing the high school graduation rate and assisting adults to achieve post-secondary degrees, as its top goal. Today, Foundation officials announced funding of \$1.7 million for local education initiatives.

The initiatives, developed by leaders of the Council Bluffs Community School District and Community Education Foundation, are priority programs to meet the challenges facing education in the community.

“We have some key needs in the district where philanthropy can help,” said Dr. Martha Bruckner, new Council Bluffs Community Schools Superintendent, “and, the Iowa West Foundation came through.”

“The Foundation has a history of supporting innovative start-up programs and effective partnerships, and these initiatives are exciting examples,” added Todd Graham, Executive Director and CEO of the Iowa West Foundation.

The priority initiatives will begin in the 2008-2009 school year.

- \$420,000 is for School Administration Managers (SAMS) to support principals and strengthen instructional leadership. In other states, SAMS have freed up significant time for principals to work with teachers on improving instruction. Bruckner said seven schools in the district will have SAMS.

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- \$680,000 is for improved user-friendly technology tools to assist teachers throughout the district. An upgraded network, a student data analysis system, and a curriculum management system are all critical for schools to assess students and help them meet their goals of graduation.
- \$70,000 is to purchase two shuttle buses to improve access for students to educational opportunities in the district. Free and regular transportation throughout the day between Abraham Lincoln High School, Kaneshville School, Thomas Jefferson High School, and the Tucker Center is needed. Transportation often is a barrier for students to engage in these opportunities. Kaneshville is a credit recovery center, and Tucker houses career preparation programs for youth.
- \$556,000 is for Scholarships and Training for Adult Re-entry Students (STARS). This program, which is administered by the Community Education Foundation (CEF), provides a supplemental scholarship source for low-income adults to attend post-secondary educational institutions. The program started in 1997, and a recent evaluation showed the program to be highly effective, but underutilized. The Iowa West funding will increase STARS scholarships, support staff, and provide marketing materials. New CEF Executive Director Julie Payne said, “nearly 100 STARS participants have received degrees, but we want to double that in two years.”

According to Iowa West Foundation President Chuck Smith, a 2007 Pottawattamie County community needs assessment done by the University of Nebraska at Omaha cited educational attainment as one of the main needs in the area, and “the Iowa West Foundation made it a top priority.”

Bruckner added that she collaborated with Education First Consulting, a national firm whose clients have included the Gates Foundation, the Washington State Board of Education and the Ohio Business Alliance for Education & the Economy, and the Oregon Chalkboard Project. The Iowa West Foundation provided funds to utilize the expertise of Education First Consulting. She also said the Wallace Foundation, a private foundation in New York with a focus on education leadership, will provide in-kind support and other funding for the SAM’S project.

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The Iowa West Foundation, headquartered in Council Bluffs, is funded from investment earnings and the Iowa West Racing Association. The association receives fees from casino operators, Ameristar and Harrah's.

For more information on the Iowa West Foundation visit its website at [www.iowawestfoundation.org](http://www.iowawestfoundation.org).

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